EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF PARENTING SUPPORT ON DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES AND THE MEDIATING ROLES OF PARENTING STRESS AND PARENTAL EFFICACY IN AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES

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Abstract: The associations between parenting support and discipline strategies were examined in a sample of American Indian families in Oklahoma. The mediating roles of parenting stress and parental efficacy were also examined. Forty-six parents with children aged 6-12 years participated. Results were mixed for the impact of parenting support on other parenting aspects. Parenting stress and parental efficacy were not significant mediators in the link between parenting stress and discipline strategies. However, exploratory analyses revealed parenting stress to mediate the association between family resources and discipline strategies. Specifically, fewer family resources were associated with higher parenting stress, which in turn is associated with higher use of ineffective discipline strategies. Implications of the results are discussed, including clinical implications and utility of the measures used in this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parents' discipline strategies often play a critical role in children's social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005). Decades of research have documented children's need for both warmth and limit setting. Parents who are responsive to their children's needs while exerting high levels of control provide a nurturing environment for their children to grow while fostering self-control and emotion regulation (Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957). Specifically, how parents respond to their children's misbehavior has a direct impact on children's disruptive behavior, such as verbal and physical aggression, and noncompliance (Stormshak, Bierman, McMahon, & Lengua, 2000). One key factor in assisting parents use more effective discipline strategies is the amount of support they receive and on which they can depend. A strong support system has important implications in several domains of well-being. Parents with more support typically report lower stress levels than parents who do not have much support (Fagan, Bernd, & Whiteman, 2007). Parents who receive social and parenting support from family and friends often are better able to cope with the daily challenges of being a parent (Weis, 2002).

It is important to note that the majority of extant parenting research has been conducted primarily among Caucasian families and those ascribing to majority culture. Despite the rising number of minority populations in the U.S., minority families remain greatly underrepresented

in research studies (U.S.). It remains unclear whether parenting constructs and their associations found among majority families are valid in similar ways among minority families. Additionally, the majority of measures and assessment tools developed and validated within majority culture families have yet to be validated among minority groups. One group that has been consistently overlooked in the literature is American Indian families. Few studies have empirically investigated parenting and family dynamics among American Indian families. The limited literature on those families and the socialization practices they utilize has primarily focused on clinical samples, and tended to rely on anecdotal observations and expert experience. This body of research has given insight into many Native family characteristics. Nonetheless, systematic and empirical examination of such variables is critical, as well as research among community samples of American Indian families.

The purpose of the current study was to closely examine parenting among American Indian families. Specifically, the study explored parenting support, parenting stress, parental efficacy, and parent discipline strategies in a community sample of American Indian families. The study examined associations among the aforementioned variables, as well as indirect pathways among parenting support and discipline strategies (i.e. mediational pathways). Chapter 2 reviews extant literature on the variables of interest among families within majority culture. The author will then discuss relevant American Indian family characteristics.

CHAPTER II

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Discipline Strategies

Decades of research document the importance of the parent-child relationship to child development. Attentive and responsive parents provide a warm and accepting style that nurtures children's emotional and social development (Putallaz & Heflin, 1990; Zhou, 2002). Adolescents who perceive their parents as more nurturing are less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors (Arım, Dahinten, Marshall, & Shapka, 2011). The discipline strategies parents use in response to their children's misbehavior in turn impact their children's disruptive behavior and emotional wellbeing (Stormshak, Bierman, McMahon, & Lengua, 2000). Parents who use harsh discipline strategies (i.e. high levels of scolding, anger, losing temper and yelling, etc.) have consistently been linked to more negative interactions with their child and worse child outcomes. Parents' use of corporal punishment has been linked to the development of aggressive behavior in children (Gershoff, 2002). Contrarily, children of parents who encourage autonomy and independence typically learn to self-regulate their emotions and behaviors. (Wong, 2008; Calkins, Smith, Gill, & Johnson, 1998). These children also tend to experience more difficulties in their academics and social interactions. A recent longitudinal study demonstrated that maternal and paternal harsh verbal discipline predicted child problem behaviors and depressive symptoms approximately a year later (Wang & Kenny, 2014).

On the other hand, parents' lack of consistency and permissiveness also adversely affects child misbehavior (Brown, Arnold, Dobbs, & Doctoroff, 2007). Inconsistency is reflected in low parental monitoring of child behavior, making it less likely that the parent will observe and address child problem behaviors. A parent may also be inconsistent in responding to misbehavior, addressing it at times and ignoring it, or perhaps even reinforcing it at others. These inconsistencies create confusion, cause frustration to the child, and decrease the quality of parent-child interaction (Acker et al., 1996).

Parenting Support

Parents with higher levels of support report using more effective discipline strategies than those with lower levels of support. Parents who have higher levels of social support tend to be more emotionally and verbally responsive, and rank higher on warmth and monitoring than their counterparts (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch, & Ungar, 2005; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1998; Weinraub & Wolf, 1983).

Social and parenting support to parents can come from a variety of different sources (i.e. spouse, extended family, friends, and community) and take different forms (instrumental/tangible, emotional, etc.). Family and friends may act as sources of information regarding parenting practices and child development. They may also model specific parenting practices, and give parenting advice (MacPhee, Fritz, & Miller-Heyl, 1996). Research indicates that different forms of support may be more valuable to parents at different stages of the child's development and with different contextual factors (i.e. acculturation and socioeconomic status; Crnic & Greenberg, 1990). For example, if a family experiences great financial need, instrumental support may be especially valuable. It is important to consider the type of support parents receive and whether it directly alleviates the pressures of parenting responsibilities when

evaluating the impact of a strong support system. Bonds, Gondoli, Sturge-Apple, and Salem (2002) found that parenting support, rather than general social support, was a better predictor of more effective discipline strategies among parents. Unfortunately, the extant literature examining the influence of social support on parenting dimensions has focused on general social support. Many studies include a question about supporters' willingness to help with childcare, however, as previously mentioned parenting support covers a wider array of factors.

Indirect Pathways: Parenting Support and Stress

Belsky (1984) and Cochran & Brassard (1979) theorized that social support may have direct and indirect effects on parenting and child outcomes. Research examining the link between general social support and parenting domains typically ties support to the amount of stress a parent experiences. Constant parenting responsibilities often cause a great deal of stress for parents. Parenting stress has been conceptualized as the psychological distress a parent experiences when feeling that he/she lacks the resources (i.e. financial resources, parenting knowledge) necessary to meet the demands of parenting (Abidin, 1995). While today's average adult faces many stressors, the pressures of parenting have been shown to uniquely predict psychological as well as physical outcomes for both parents and children (Deater-Deckard, 2008).

Bonds and colleagues (2002) found that parenting support from family and friends was associated with optimal parenting behavior as reflected by warmth and monitoring levels of the parents. Results also showed that this link was mediated by parenting stress. This indicates that parents receiving higher levels of parenting support report lower levels of stress in their parenting role, which in turn is associated with better parenting behavior than found in their counterparts.

Indirect Pathways: Parenting Support and Efficacy

Parenting efficacy may be another mediator in the association between parenting support and parenting behavior. Albert Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy suggests that one's belief in one's ability to perform a task influences how well he/she actually carries out that task. Applying this theory to parenting suggests that a parent's parenting self-efficacy, or beliefs about his/her parenting abilities, will directly influence his/her parenting behavior (Coleman & Karraker, 1998). Thus, parents with higher levels of parental self-efficacy are more likely to engage in optimal parenting practices. Members of a support group may affirm a parent's behavior and strategies, thereby instilling a sense of confidence in their parenting strategies. Additionally, support can enhance parenting efficacy through modeling and observation. A parent who observes other parents effectively manage misbehavior may in turn feel more effective in his/her role when using these modeled methods.

Parental self-efficacy has been linked to positive discipline strategies and child outcomes (see Jones & Prinz, 2005 for a review). Bogenschneider, Small, and Tsay (1997) found parental self-efficacy correlated with monitoring and responsiveness levels of mothers and fathers. Another study found parents who were high on parental self-efficacy were more consistent in interacting with their children and were less likely to use harsh discipline strategies and overreact (Gross, Sambrook, & Fogg, 1999). Sanders and Woolley (2005) found that higher maternal parental efficacy predicted more effective discipline strategies in both clinical and community samples. Coleman and Karraker (2003) found that a mother's beliefs about her parenting ability predicted children's cognitive developmental level. Teti et al. (1991) found parental efficacy to predict maternal competence, maternal perception of child's difficulty, depressive symptoms, and social support. Importantly, they also found efficacy to fully mediate the effect of social

support on parenting behavior. Other studies have also found support for the mediational role of parental efficacy. Thus, research indicates that parental efficacy plays a crucial role in family functioning and parent-child interactions. Increasing parental efficacy may prove an important potential target for interventions that aim to better the quality of parent-child interactions and optimize the effects of social support to parents.

MacPhee and colleagues (1996) examined parental efficacy in a clinically referred sample and found that parental efficacy mediated the effect of support on parenting behavior in a clinical sample of American Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo families. These mediating effects were also observed in first-generation Mexican immigrant mothers where those with higher levels of social support had higher levels of warmth and control (Izzo, Weiss, Shanahan, & Rodrigues-Brown, 2000).

American Indians in Extant Literature

MacPhee et al.'s (1996) is one of few studies that systematically examined parenting characteristics within American Indian (AI) families. Results of the study also found that when compared to Anglo and Mexican American samples, AI parents felt closer to their support system (MacPhee et al., 1996). In addition, AI parents relied more on extended kin members for support, and had more frequent contact with members of their support system. Unfortunately, empirical literature examining parenting and family functioning in AI populations is scarce. The majority of extant literature on AI families has come from anecdotal and qualitative data. These studies pointed to unique child-rearing techniques and challenges found within AI families and communities. It is important to note that within AI populations there exist many cultural variations. AI individuals have varying degrees of identifying with American Indian traditions,

beliefs and values, in other words degrees of acculturation. Nonetheless, there are shared themes and values, as well as risk factors within Native cultures (Red Horse, 1997).

Within the 566 federally recognized AI tribes, the U.S. Census (2013) reports that in the year 2013 5.2 million individuals identified themselves as AI. An important theme found in Native communities is the involvement of extended family members in the childrearing. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and community and tribe leaders are involved in socializing and raising children (Boggs, 1958, Lewis, 1970). An aunt or an uncle may hold the responsibility of building the child's character; they become "important teachers and mentors who share values, impart wisdom, serve as role models, and reinforce tribal teaching" (Glover, 2001). Parents may also rely on grandparents for childcare. Grandparents and tribal leaders teach and maintain tribal values through storytelling and tribal songs.

Extended family involvement can act as a protective factor in the face of the adversities and challenges facing AI families today. LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, and Whitbeck (2006) found that community elder involvement was associated with resilience among AI adolescents. Those who participated in traditional activities, identified with American Indian culture, and had traditional spiritual involvement were also more resilient that their counterparts.

While LaFromboise and colleagues' (2006) study did not examine the effects of social support on parents, it does offer some support of the benefits of the kinship system found in Native communities. Scholars in the field (Campbell et al., 2011) have pointed to the essential role extended family members play in child rearing and socialization. In many cases, extended family members assume many of the childcare and discipline responsibilities. They are a source of parenting knowledge for parents as well (Coleman et al., 1998).

Despite overcoming various historical trauma (e.g. forced removal, boarding schools), there continue to be many challenges that face American Indian families today. These challenges include high rates of suicide, poverty, substance use, teen pregnancies, high school dropout, and psychopathology (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; CDC, 2013; Glover, 2001; LaFromboise, et al., 2006). Parents in adversity homes are more likely to utilize maladaptive parenting behaviors and their children are at a higher risk for developing behavior problems. To our knowledge, the benefits of extended family parenting support within AI families have not been systematically studied.

Current Study

Parenting support has been associated with discipline strategies used by parents in majority culture. The current study sought to expand our understanding of the empirical associations between parenting support, parenting stress, parental efficacy, and discipline strategies within a community sample of American Indian parents. Indirect patterns of association were also be examined (i.e. mediational path). Implications for working with AI families are discussed.

Hypotheses

Based on the aforementioned findings among majority culture families positively linking parenting support with effective discipline strategies, and parental efficacy, and negatively linking it with parenting stress, several hypotheses were made regarding the examined American Indian sample. First, it was hypothesized that parenting support would be negatively associated with ineffective discipline strategies. Further, it was hypothesized that parenting support would be negatively associated with parenting stress, and positively linked to parental efficacy. It was

also hypothesized that the use of ineffective discipline strategies would be associated with parenting stress and negatively linked to parental efficacy.

Mediation analyses were conducted to examine parenting stress, parental efficacy, and parenting support in association with discipline strategies. Specifically, the analyses targeted two research questions. First, is the link between parenting support and discipline strategies mediated by parenting stress? Second, is the link between parenting support and discipline strategies mediated by parental efficacy? It was hypothesized that parenting stress and parental efficacy would mediate the association between parenting support and use of effective discipline strategies.

Finally, for exploratory purposes and based on trends in the data, a mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether the link between family resources and discipline strategies is mediated by parental stress.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

Fifty-three parents/caregivers participated in the current study; however seven participants were excluded from analyses due to missing data, unsigned consent form, and reporting that the child had significant developmental delays. It was thought that such delays have the potential to cause qualitative differences in parenting strategies and stress. Therefore, a final sample of forty-six parents/caregivers were included in our analyses. Inclusion criteria for this study included being a parent or caregiver of a child between the ages of 6 and 12 years with no developmental delays. Both child and parent/caregiver must have reported being American Indian on the demographic questionnaire.

Participants ranged in age between 24 and 83 years (M = 38.60, SD = 10.82). Children were 6 to12 years (M = 8.9, SD = 2.0). Forty percent of participants were Choctaw, fourteen were Ojibwe, and the remainder represented Cherokee, Chickasaw, Navajo, Muscogee (Creek), Yuchi, Arapaho, Pawnee, Ponca, Potawatomi, Quapaw, Quechan, Sac and Fox, and Wichita tribes. Approximately 52% were from urban areas, 31% were from rural settings, and 17% resided on reservations. Approximately 71% resided in Oklahoma while the remainder lived in Tennessee, Minnesota, California, North Dakota, Wyoming, Wisconsin, Arkansas, and Hawaii. Caregivers reported a wide range for highest level of education completed: 2% did not complete

high school; 22% completed high school; 41% completed some college; 24% obtained a college degree; and 11% had a graduate degree. Table 1 summarizes additional demographics information.

Materials

Informed Consent

Parents signed an informed consent that outlined information regarding the purpose, risks, and benefits of participating in this study.

Demographic Questionnaire

This questionnaire assessed family income, occupation, age, level of education, ethnicity, tribal enrollment and affiliations, and sex. The form also included questions regarding the target child' grade level, sex, and ethnicity.

Parenting Support From Family and Friends (PSFFF; Bonds et al., 2002)

This 38-item questionnaire was adapted by Bonds and colleagues (2002) based on the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL; Cohen, Mermelstein, Kamarck, & Hoberman, 1985) and the Perceived Social Support from Family and Friends measure (Procidano & Heller, 1983). The PSFFF targets four types of support reflecting subscales of Practical Support, Informational Support, Esteem Support, and Venting Support. The questionnaire, however, is designed to yield one total score. The items are based on a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *strongly disagree*). Higher scores indicate a higher degree of parenting support. In the study by Bonds and colleagues (2002), the PSFFF showed good convergent and divergent validity, and acceptable internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .94 for the Total score. The current study yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .97. The PSFFF was used in this study to measure the level parenting support perceived by parents.

Positive and Negative Parenting Support (PNPS; Armans & Sullivan, 2015)

The PNPS is a brief 4-item measure of both positive and negative forms of support for parenting. The PNPS was developed for the purposes of this study after examining Whaler, Leske, and Rogers's (1979) Community Interaction Checklist. The PNPS was used in this study to gain a better understanding of parents' perception of support they are receiving.

Family Resource Scale (FRS; Dunst & Leet, 1988; Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988)

The FRS is a 31-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess the adequacy of available family resources. Items are based on a 5-point scale and measure a broad array of needs from health care to physical necessities to child care and time for family and sleep. In one study with economically diverse samples, the FRS Total score demonstrated good internal consistency with Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from .83 to .85 (Brannan, Manteuffel, Holde, & Heflinger, 2006). The current study yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .87. The FRS was used to gain more information about resources available to our participant and thus provided a better context in which to understand families in our sample.

Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-4 SF; Abidin, 1995, 2012)

The PSI-4 SF is a 360-item self-report questionnaire based on the full-length scale (PSI) assessing parental stress, parent-child dysfunctional interaction, and the degree to which the parent views the child as difficult (Abidin, 1995). The scale uses a 4-point scale, yielding scores from 12 to 60. Higher scores indicate higher levels of stress. The PSI-4 SF questionnaire yields a Total Stress score of dysfunctional parenting from three other subscales: Parental Distress, Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction, and Difficult Child. The PSI-4 SF shows good internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .95 for the Total Stress scale; (Abidin, 2012). The

current study yielded an alpha coefficients of .92 for Total Stress. The PSI-4 SF was used in this study to measure parents' level of parenting stress.

Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC; Johnston & Mash, 1989).

Originally constructed by Gibaurd-Wallston and colleague (1978) and revised by Johnston and Mash (1989), the PSOC is a 17-item self-report measure that assesses parents' sense of efficacy and satisfaction in their parenting role based on a 6-point rating scale. The PSOC yields a total score between 17 and 102. Higher levels of parental efficacy and satisfaction are reflected in higher scores. The parenting satisfaction subscale measures parents' contentment with their role, while parental efficacy assesses a parent's perceived level of competence in the parenting role. The PSOC shows adequate internal consistency with alpha coefficients of .75 for Satisfaction, .76 for Efficacy, and .79 for the Total score (Johnston et al., 1989). The current study yielded Cronbach's alphas of .67 for Satisfaction, .79 for Efficacy, and .81 for Total. The PSOC Efficacy subscale was used in this study to measure parents' sense of competence.

Parenting Scale (PS; Arnold, O'Leary, Wolff, & Acker, 1993)

The Parenting Scale (Arnold et al., 1993) is a self-report rating scale designed to measure dysfunctional discipline strategies utilized by parents. While it was originally developed for parents of children 18 months to 4 years, it has been validated with parents of elementary school children. It yields scores for two different subscales for this population: Laxness, and Overreactivity (Collett, Gimpel, Greenson, & Gunderson, 2001). Scores were averaged to obtain a total score between 1 and 7 with higher scores indicating less effective strategies. In previous studies, the PS demonstrated good reliability and internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .87 for the Total score (Collett et al., 2001). The current study yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .87 for Total score. The Parenting Scale was used in this study to better understand the discipline

strategies utilized by American Indian parents as represented in our sample.

Procedures

Prior to the distribution of any assessment materials, review and approval were obtained from the appropriate administration (e.g., event coordinators, school coordinators, institutional review boards). Recruitment of participants was completed using three primary methods: (1) flyers were distributed at cultural events (e.g., powwows); (2) coordinators of Indian Education programs (e.g., Johnson O'Mally) were asked to assist in data collection by handing out flyers to parents in the program; (3) postings on listservs belonging to American Indian academic groups. Formal approval was obtained through Choctaw Nation's Institutional Review Board. All questionnaire packets were mailed to those who contacted the researchers regarding their interest in participating. Packets included a parent letter outlining a brief description of the project, two consent forms (participants were instructed to keep one copy for their own records), the previous list of measures, and additional measures as part of a larger study. The packet also included a form with blank spaces for the participants' name and address to be entered into a drawing. Participants had the option of returning the completed packet to the researcher at the time of recruitment, or mail the packet via postage-paid envelope once completed. Finally, participants were compensated with a $25 gift card and a child's coloring book upon their completion and return of the questionnaire packet. Participants were also placed in a drawing for an additional $25 gift card; one drawing was held for every twenty five completed packets received. A total of two drawings was be held.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were first examined in order to understand the variability in and distribution of our sample and provide a context in which to interpret subsequent results. Table 1 summarizes means and standard deviations of discussed variables.

Overall parenting support, as measured by the PSFFF Total score, ranged from 38 to 152. Only 2% of the sample fell below the half-way point (95) of the scale's possible range. Compared to the Bonds et al. (2002) community sample of mothers with children aged 9 to 11 years, the AI sample in our study reported comparable levels of parenting support (z = -1.82, p = n.s.). Items of the PNPS were examined for descriptive purposes and to gain a better understanding of parents' perception of support they are receiving. Results of the PNPS are summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

Parenting stress was measured using the PSI-4 SF yielding Total scores ranging from 39 to 118. Families in our sample reported significantly lower levels of parenting stress than a community sample in a study by Haskett, Ahern, Ward, and Allaire (2006) comprised primarily of minority families (z = -4.59, $p < .05$). Approximately 4% of caregivers scored in the clinical range on the PSI-4 SF (i.e., raw score $\geq$ 101).

The FRS Total score was calculated to assess the adequacy of resources available to

families included in this sample. Total scores ranged from 72 to 144 and suggest participants reported an adequate level of resources typical of financially secure families (Brannan et al., 2006).

PSOC Efficacy scores were calculated as a measurement of parental sense of competency. Efficacy scores ranged from 19 to 41. To our knowledge, the study by Dionne, Davis, Sheeber, and Madrigal (2009) examining competency levels of teenage mothers pre- and post-intervention is the only published study that used the PSOC among an AI sample. However, the study did not report scores for the Efficacy subscale. Comparatively, the sample in our study had higher efficacy levels than a standardization sample in a study by Ohan, Leung, and Johnston (2000).

The Total Score of the Parenting Scale was calculated using the Collett et al. (2001) model. The Total PS scores ranged from 1.23 to 4.23. Means and standard deviation for the Total and subscale scores of the PS are summarized in Table 1. Results suggest families in our sample reported similar use of ineffective strategies to that reported by a community sample studied by Freeman and DeCourcey (2007; $z = 1.78$, p = n.s.).

Associations Between Variables

First, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant negative correlation between parenting support and ineffective discipline strategies. Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated for PSFFF Total and PS Total scores. Analyses did not reveal a significant association between the two scores, thus our hypothesis was not supported. Similarly, there were no significant correlations between the subscale scores of the PSFFF and PS. Table 1 summarizes these and subsequently discussed correlations. Because several of the current study variables have not been empirically examined among AI families, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated for exploratory purposes (see Table 1).These results should be

interpreted with caution due to the increased risk of type I error when conducting a large number of correlations.

Second, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant negative correlation between parenting support and parenting stress. The PSFFF Total score was correlated with the PSI-4 SF Total score using Pearson product-moment correlations. This hypothesis was also not supported. Similarly, none of the PSFFF subscale scores showed significant correlations with PSI-4 SF subscale scores.

Third, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant positive correlation between parenting support and parental efficacy. Parenting support as measured by the PSFFF Total score was correlated with the Efficacy subscale of the PSOC using a Pearson product-moment correlation. Our hypothesis was not supported. Additionally, there were no significant correlations between PSFFF and PSOC subscale scores.

Fourth, it was hypothesized that the use of ineffective discipline strategies would be positively correlated with parenting stress. PS Total scores were correlated with PSI-4 SF Total scores using Pearson product-moment correlations. Analyses revealed a significant correlation between the two scores, $r(46) = .43$, $p < .05$, thus supporting our hypothesis. Other significant associations were found among PS and PSI-4 SF subscale scores.

Fifth, it was hypothesized that the use of ineffective discipline strategies would be negatively correlated with parental efficacy. PS Total scores were correlated with Efficacy subscale scores of the PSOC. Pearson product-moment correlation revealed a significant association between PS Total and Efficacy, $r(46) = -.42$, $p < .05$. Thus, our hypothesis was supported. Results revealed additional significant associations between PS and PSOC subscale scores which can be found in Table 1.

Finally, it should be noted that a series of *t*-tests were conducted to compare participants in and outside the state of Oklahoma on study variables (PSFFF, PS, PSI, and PSOC). No significant differences were found.

Parallel Multivariate Mediation Analyses

To examine the potential mediating roles of parenting stress and parental efficacy in the association between parenting support and discipline strategies, the PSFFF score was used as a measure of parenting support, and the PS Total score was used to assess discipline strategies. The PSI-SF Total score was used to measure parenting stress, and the Efficacy subscale of the PSOC was used to measure parental efficacy.

The suggested method for determining statistical significance of potential mediators is via bootstrapping (Hayes, 2009, 2012; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). Preacher and Hayes' (2008) mediation techniques using bootstrapping allow for detection of indirect effects without the presence of a direct effect. In order to determine the significance of the mediation, the 95% confidence interval (CI) of the sampling distribution of the mean was examined. If the confidence interval does not include zero, it is considered statistically significant (i.e. $p < .05$). Following the recommendations of Hayes (2013), 5000 samples were derived from the original sample by a process of re-sampling with replacement. Because FRS scores were significantly associated with PS Total scores, the FRS was added as a covariate in the model in order to control for the effects of income and available family resources.

The total indirect effect for the model was not significant, $b = -.0008$, 95% CI = -.0019, .0026 (see Figure 1). In other words, there was not a significant indirect effect of support on parenting strategies through parental efficacy and parenting stress. Due to missing data, this model was also constructed using Mplus version 7.31 software (muthen & Muthen, 1998-2012)

utilizing full information maximum likelihood estimation. In this way, all of the available observations for each variable were used to compute the likelihood function. No difference was found in results obtained. It is important to note, that our small sample size likely rendered this analysis underpowered (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007).

Exploratory Analyses

Another mediation model was constructed as part of our exploratory analyses. The model (see Figure 2) tested the potential mediating role of parenting stress in the association between family resources and parenting strategies controlling for child age. The Total score of the PSI-4 SF was used as a measure of parenting stress while the FRS and PS Total scores were used as measures of available family resources and discipline strategies, respectively. There was a significant indirect effect of family resources on discipline strategies, b = -.0035, 95% CI = -.0078, -.0006. This represents a relatively small effect size, b = -.09, 95% CI = -.21, -.01.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Families in our sample had comparable parenting support levels as measured by the PSFFF to the standardization sample in the study by Bonds et al. (2002), though roughly 9% of our sample fell below the minimum score reported by the researchers. Moreover, caregivers in our sample reported adequate levels of resources on the FRS (e.g. healthcare insurance, transportation) typical of financially secure families (Brennan, Manteuffel, Holden, & Heflinger, 2006).

Parents' stress levels as reported by the PSI-4 SF Total scores were lower than expected in a community sample. Families in our study reported significantly less parenting stress than reported by the sample in a study by Haskett and colleagues (2006), which was comprised primarily of minority families. In fact, only 4% or our sample reported stress levels in the clinical range. This Total Stress subscale showed good internal consistency in the current study, which suggests the PSI-4 SF to be a valid measure of stress among this sample of AI families. Other researchers have also found this measure to have good validity among young AI mothers (Barlow et al., 2015).

Parental efficacy as measured by the PSOC Efficacy subscale showed a wide range of scores. Families in this study reported significantly higher levels of parenting efficacy than reported by other normative samples (Ohan et al., 2000). This is consistent with other empirical findings from

similar AI samples that were not geographically isolated (Coser & Sullivan, 2014). The PSOC Efficacy scale showed moderate internal consistency in the current study, suggesting it is a valid measure of parental efficacy among AI families. Finally, discipline strategies reported by the PS Total score suggest that families in our sample report similar use of ineffective strategies as would be expected in a community sample. The PS Total subscale showed good internal consistency in this study.

Overall, trends in the data suggest our sample of caregivers is faring well in examined aspects of parenting. That is, caregivers endorsed moderate levels of parenting support, low levels of parenting stress, and higher than average levels of parental efficacy. Families also reported moderate levels of available resources. These findings add to current literature suggesting that while historical trauma may negatively impact parenting behavior such as parenting competency, protective factors within AI communities, such as extended family involvement, may serve to buffer this impact (Dalla & Gamble, 1997; Dielman, Barton & Cattell, 1977; Glover, 2001). The measures utilized in this study also demonstrated good internal consistency and a wide range of scores, suggesting their validity among our sample.

As expected, significant associations were found between parenting stress, parental efficacy, and discipline strategies. Parents who reported higher levels of stress were more likely to report higher use of ineffective discipline strategies than caregivers reporting lower levels of stress. Additionally, parents reporting higher levels of parental efficacy were more likely to report use of effective discipline strategies than those reporting lower levels of parental efficacy. These associations replicate findings in majority culture and suggest that these parenting dimensions are linked in similar ways in AI families who are not geographically isolated (Coser

& Sullivan, 2014). Moreover, the observed significant correlations further support the utility and validity of the used measures among AI families.

Although it was hypothesized that parenting support as measured by the PSFFF would predict various dimensions of parenting including parenting stress, parental sense of efficacy, and use of effective discipline strategies, this prediction was not supported by the data. This finding is at odds with various authors who discuss the benefits of support to parents both in AI communities and majority culture based on theory as well as empirical findings (Assher, Hermanns, Deković, 2008, Attree, 2005; Belsky, 1984; Ceballo et al., 2002; Fagan, et al., 2007; Moran & Ghate, 2005). Researchers have found parents with higher levels of support to be more effective as disciplinarians and less stressed as well as more satisfied in their parenting role (Crnic & Low, 2002; Östberg et al., 2000). Literature also discusses the importance of extended family involvement in AI communities and their critical role of support to parents (Glover, 2001; LaFromboise & Low, 1998; MacPhee et al., 1996). In one study systematically examining extended family involvement more than half of AI parents indicated that extended family members played a significant role in raising their children (Coser et al., 2014).

Taken together, these findings make it unlikely that the lack of significant association in the current study between parenting support and other parenting variables reflects an actual lack of association between these parenting dimensions. Alternatively, our findings likely point to an inadequate way of measuring parenting support. Although the PSFFF had good internal consistency, it was not significantly correlated with any other parenting variable, suggesting the measure may have not captured perceived parenting support. Comparatively, PNPS reports suggest a higher level of support than portrayed by the PSFFF, which may suggest that the PSFFF may not be assessing all types of support our families report receiving. This would be

consistent with current literature discussing unique types of support that AI families receive (Glover, 2001). Because the PSFFF has not been validated within AI families, and has only been used by one study thus far, measures of support tailored to AI family and community structures may provide a better understanding of support and its benefits in this unique population. It is important to note, that families in this sample did not necessarily have low levels of support on the PSFFF. However, it may be that the type of support impacting parents in this sample is not well captured by the PSFFF. This is further supported by the significant associations between family resources as measured by the FRS and various parenting variables (parenting competency and satisfaction, parental distress, discipline strategies). Although another possible explanation is that parent-report measures may not show strong inter-correlations due to the involvement of multiple caregivers in raising AI children, it is unclear why this "wash out" effect would only impact PSFFF associations. Therefore, this explanation is not likely.

A major focus of the study was to examine discipline strategies in light of perceived parenting support and its impact on parental stress and efficacy. Our mediation analyses indicated that parenting stress and parental efficacy did not significantly mediate the association between parenting support and discipline strategies. As previously discussed, it is more likely that this lack of significance is a result of an inadequate measure of support rather than support being unrelated to other parenting dimensions. Although parents in our sample reported lower than expected stress levels, the significant associations between parenting stress and other parenting variables make this an unlikely reason for the lack of significance in the model. This is further supported by our exploratory mediation analysis examining the impact of availability of resources on discipline strategies through parenting stress. It is also important to note that our analyses were likely underpowered due to our small sample size, which may have made it

unlikely to detect indirect effects of support on parenting strategies through parental efficacy and parenting stress (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007).

Exploratory mediation analyses indicated that parenting stress partially mediated the association between resources and use of effective discipline strategies. In other words, as the availability of resources increased, the level of perceived stress decreased, and in turn the use of ineffective discipline strategies decreased. This finding highlights the importance of external sources of support, specifically, availability of resources and necessities for AI family functioning. Results are also consistent with research on majority culture families documenting the higher likelihood to use ineffective discipline strategies among parents reporting lower income levels and limited availability of necessities (e.g. DeGarmo, Forgatch, & Martinez, 1999; Ettinger, Riley, Colantouni, & Mendelson, 2017; Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007; Pinderhughes, Dodge, Bates, Pettit, & Zelli, 2000). As mentioned above, the results also further suggest that the PSFFF was an inadequate measure of support for this sample.

Clinical Implications

A number of clinical implications follow from the discussed results. Our results showed mixed support for the importance of availability of support and this discrepancy is important in its own respect. The PSFFF, our measure of parenting support, showed good psychometric validity, but had limited predictive validity in this study. This measure was developed with majority culture samples, and therefore reinforces the importance of developing and norming measures specifically for AI tribes and nations. There is currently a lack of such measures, and caution should be used when having to resort to using non-validated measures when working with AI families. Clinicians may find it beneficial to qualitatively discuss a family's network of support to understand the various type of support available to and valued by families. In

understanding a family's support network clinicians can better serve families by capitalizing on such benefits or addressing support needs. Bigfoot & Funderburk (2011) underscore the importance of considering who is involved in raising children and in what ways when working with AI families. Thus, it is critical for clinicians to consider the broader family lines among AI families and communities. Involving extended family in treatment may one way to aid in increasing retention and enhancing treatment effects (Bigfoot et al., 2011).

Additionally, parenting stress helped explain the association between availability of resources and parenting behavior, specifically, discipline strategies. Our findings represent an extension of current findings in the literature to our sample of AI families, and highlight the importance of assessing a family's resources when working with AI families and children. The availability of resources has the potential of influencing the course of treatment not only directly (i.e. transportation to treatment), but indirectly through parents' stress level and should therefore be a considered when providing treatment services. In this way, assessing for and addressing lack of resource availability should be a priority when serving AI families and children.

Limitations and Strengths

The current study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, this study had a small sample size which limited the type of analyses conducted and likely made some analyses underpowered. A larger sample size may allow for more power in our analyses as well as allow us to conduct more complex analyses. Additionally, the current study relied solely on self-report measures, which may increase the likelihood for shared-method variance. While self-report measures are ideal for variables such as parenting stress and parental efficacy, using a multi-method (e.g. incorporating interviews) and multi-informant (e.g. including extended family members) approaches would decrease shared-method variance as well

as allow us to have a better understanding of variables such as parenting support and discipline strategies. Additionally, while the measures used in this study have been widely used and standardized, they have not been normed for AI families. Furthermore, it is important to note that AI nations and tribes vary in their cultures, values, beliefs, traditions, and practices. Our sample had wide variability across tribes/nations, and geographic area. Thus, our results should be interpreted in light of the current sample characteristics.

The current study also has notable strengths. First, our study simultaneously examined multiple parenting dimensions, providing an understanding of how these variables may be associated with one another. We gathered systematic quantitative data on AI families – a population greatly underrepresented in current parenting and family literature. This represents a first step to empirically examine the role of parenting support among AI families. Previous research with AI families relies primarily on anecdotal data and lacks equal representation of studies conducting research using a systematic quantitative approach. Additionally, we utilized bootstrapping methods to enhance the sensitivity of our statistical analyses in light of our small sample size. This study also primarily included well-validated and standardized measures of various parenting dimensions. With the exception of the PSFFF, our measures yielded acceptable internal consistency, providing preliminary support for the use of most of these measures among AI families with similar characteristics. Additionally, our data reflected a wide range of scores on most of the examined variables of parenting, thus providing support for the obtained results and suggests that these scales may be useful for use in future studies with AI families. This study was the first to use the PSFFF with a sample of AI families. Our findings suggest that this measure may not be adequate for use among this population. Finally, our sample represented various AI tribes in Midwestern states Oklahoma and Wyoming who are not geographically

isolated. The diversity in our sample enhances our ability to generalize results expanding on previous literature focusing on a specific tribe/nation.

Future Directions for Research

Several directions exist for future research. First, it is imperative to develop well-validated measures of parenting support for AI families. This will allow for empirical examination of the characteristics of support networks available to and valued parents in AI communities. Future research should focus on understanding the involvement of extended family members in raising children and the unique characteristics of support provided by these members. Future research would also benefit from including extended family members as this would allow for a greater understanding of parenting support, as well as family rearing practices. Qualitative and mixed-methods research with community elders, parents, grandparents, and other extended family members may aid in the understanding and ultimately creation of measures of types and sources of parenting support in AI communities. Moreover, future research should seek to understand the association between parenting measures in light of the involvement of extended family members in raising children. For example, the same pattern of associations among parenting dimensions may be present for extended family members as well.

Future research should validate current standardized measures among AI populations. Although AI tribes vary in many ways, it may be beneficial to validate measures for the different AI communities as this will help bridge the current gap in the literature for systematic quantitative research on parenting and family variables. Future studies would also benefit from larger sample sizes. Although, modern statistical techniques such as bootstrapping may increase sensitivity in statistical analyses, larger sample sizes allow for more complex analyses and robust findings.

Conclusion

Parenting stress, efficacy, and discipline strategies were linked in expected directions that mirrored effects among non-AI families. Parenting stress and efficacy did not mediate the association between parenting support and discipline strategies. However, parenting stress mediated the link between family resources and discipline strategies. Findings underscore the importance of assessing for family resources when providing services to AI families as this may impact the course of treatment. Because there was mixed support for the importance of resources to AI families in our sample, results highlight the need for further research to understand and develop well-validated measures of various types parenting support within AI communities.

Our study used strong methodology and was a first step to examine the role of parenting support among AI families. Future research is needed to further understand sources of support available to and valued by AI caregivers. It is hoped that future research will expand upon this study to further bridge the gap in literature on American Indian families.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1. *Demographics.*

Variable	N = 46 (%)
Caregiver	
Biological Mother	33 (72)
Biological Father	5 (11)
Step-Mother	2 (4)
Adoptive Parent	3 (7)
Grandparent	3 (7)
Annual Household Income	
$15,000 or less	5 (11)
$15,001 - $25,000	2 (4)
$25,001 - $35,000	7 (15)
$35,001 - $45,000	8 (17)
$45,001 - $55,000	2 (4)
$55,001 - $65,000	2 (4)
$65,001 - $75,000	5 (11)
$75,001 - $85,000	6 (13)
$85,001 - $95,000	2 (4)
$95,001 - $105,000	1 (2)
> $105,000	5 (11)
Marital Status	
Married	26 (57)
Living with partner	9 (20)
Divorced	2 (4)
Separated	1 (2)
Single	8 (17)
Child Sex	
Girl	22 (49)
Boy	23 (51)

Table 2. *Correlations, means, and standard deviations of study variables.*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. PSFFF TS	–															
2. PSFFF PS	.91**	–														
3. PSFFF IS	.93**	.77**	–													
4. PSFFF ES	.90**	.73**	.78**	–												
5. PSFFF VS	.90**	.74**	.80**	.81**	–											
6. PSOC Total	.15	.10	.16	.24	.00	–										
7. PSOC Efficacy	.03	-.04	.08	.09	-.05	.85**	–									
8. PSOC Satisfaction	.21	.19	.19	.30*	.04	.89**	.52**	–								
9. PSI-4 SF Total	-.02	.14	-.07	-.10	.12	-.65**	-.47**	-.65**	–							
10. PSI-4SF PD	-.08	-.20	-.10	-.21	.06	-.57**	-.42**	-.57**	.84**	–						
11. PSI-4 SF PCDI	-.05	-.08	-.08	-.02	.07	-.60**	-.41**	-.61**	.89**	.60**	–					
12. PSI-4 SF DC	.09	.13	.01	.03	.00	-.49**	-.37**	-.47**	.83**	.46**	.71**	–				
13. PS Total	-.08	-.06	.00	-.23	-.03	-.42**	-.21	-.50**	.43**	.42**	.34*	.33*	–			
14. PS Laxness	-.13	-.14	-.11	-.18	-.02	-.30*	-.18	-.34*	.32*	.37*	.20	.21	.81**	–		
15. PS Overreactivity	-.04	.01	.04	-.24	-.01	-.50**	-.38**	-.48**	.46**	.41**	.39**	.37*	.77**	.40**	–	
16. FRS Total	.10	.12	.07	.12	.05	.29*	.19	.31*	-.29*	-.31*	-.19	-.22	-.50**	-.51**	-.40**	–
M	116.09	30.28	31.24	6.13	19.35	70.78	30.58	40.20	66.61	23.80	19.87	22.93	2.75	2.15	2.55	122.75
SD	24.23	8.01	8.05	4.42	4.42	10.48	5.55	6.46	17.96	8.34	6.22	6.58	0.59	0.80	0.90	15.31

Note. N = 46. PSFFF TS = Total Support; PSFFF PS = Practical Support; PSFFF IS = Informational Support; PSFFF ES = Esteem Support; PSFFF VS = Venting Support; PSI-4 SF PD = Parental Distress; PSI-4 SF PCDI = Parent Child Dysfunctional Interaction; PSI-4 SF DC = Difficult Child.

*p<.05; **p<.001(2-tailed).

Table 3. *PNPS Frequency Ratings.*

	Frequency of Received Support	Frequency of Unwanted Support
Never	7%	11%
Rarely	30%	63%
Monthly	24%	13%
Weekly	26%	11%
Daily	13%	2%

Note. $N = 46$.

Table 4. *PNPS Ratings.*

	How helpful is received support?	How bothersome is unwanted support?
Not at all	7%	30%
Minimally	7%	26%
Somewhat	24%	22%
Quite	24%	17%
Very	39%	4%

Note. $N = 46$.

APPENDIX B

FIGURES

Figure 1. *Association between parenting support and discipline strategies mediated by parenting sense of competence and parenting stress.*

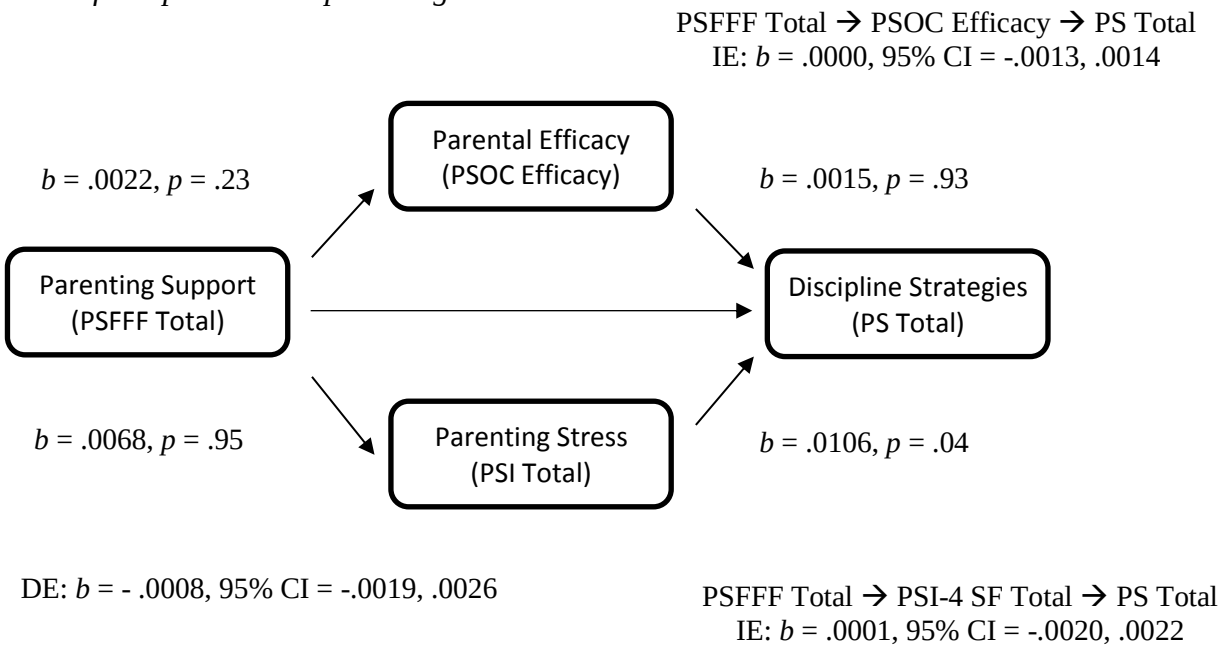
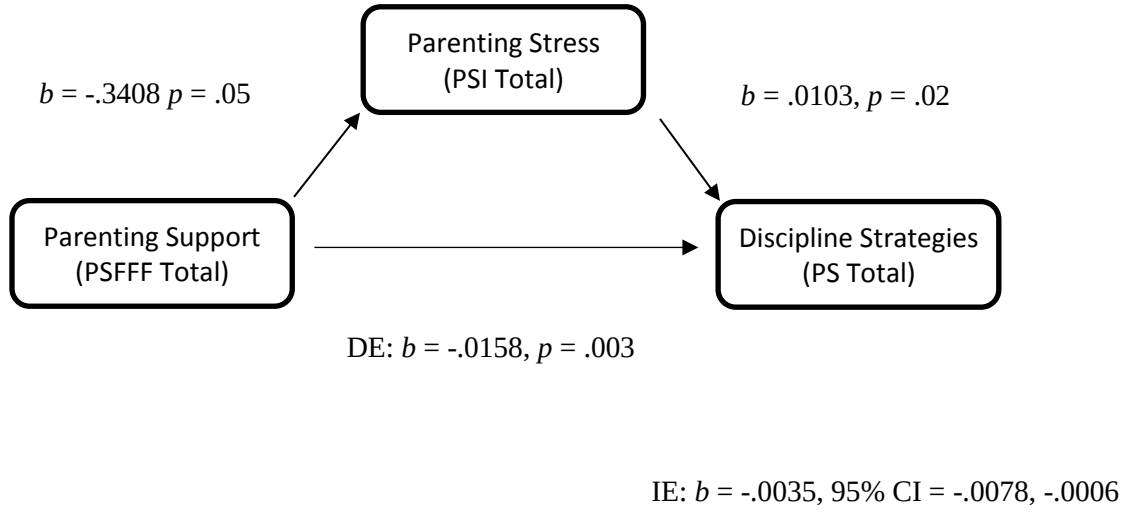


Figure 2. *Association between family resources and discipline strategies mediated by parenting stress.*



Note. IE = Indirect effect; DE = Direct effect

APPENDIX C

COMPLETE LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Research has demonstrated the importance of socialization and the parent-child relationship to children's social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes. Baumrind (1971) for example emphasized children's needs for both warmth and limit setting. Parents who are responsive to the needs of their children provide a safe haven for them and foster in them a sense of security in knowing that their needs will be met. Similarly, parents who exert high levels of control over their children foster self-regulation and disciplined behavior in their children (Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957). Current literature suggests that the specific discipline strategies parents utilize in responding to their children's misbehavior have a direct impact on their children's disruptive behavior including verbal and physical aggression, and noncompliance (Stormshak, Bierman, McMahon, & Lengua, 2000).

Much of the research examining parenting constructs has been conducted within predominantly White families. Minority families are underrepresented in the extant literature, thus it is unknown whether parenting characteristics and associations found within majority culture are valid and comparable among minority populations. Additionally, it is also unclear whether measures used when providing treatment services are valid and psychometrically sound when used with minority populations. There is a gap in the literature especially regarding American Indian families. Few studies have empirically examined parenting behavior among Native families and the socialization practices they utilize. The limited literature that has primarily focused on clinical samples of American Indian families. These findings also relied heavily on anecdotal observations and primarily qualitative data. This body of literature has given insight into many Native

family characteristics. Nonetheless, systematic and empirical examination are critical, and research among community samples is still needed. Understanding parenting dimensions within American Indian families will help bridge the gap in extant literature that will in turn better inform clinical practice and community interventions.

The purpose of the current study was to examine discipline strategies and their unique predictors within American Indian Families. Specifically, the study examined parenting support, parenting stress, and parental efficacy, in relation to parent discipline strategies, We examined associations of these variables with one another and how they may interact in distinct patterns (i.e. mediational or indirect paths). The literature review presented in Chapter 2 will examine these constructs in majority culture. The author will then discuss relevant American Indian family characteristics.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Parenting Strategies

The parent-child relationship is an important variable in the development of children. A responsive parent expressing warmth and acceptance helps build pro-social behavior in her child (Zhou, 2002). Warmth and acceptance help foster positive parent-child interactions and allow the child's needs to be met. Parental nurturance has been linked to reading acquisition in children (Merlo, Bowman, Barnett, 2007). Studies also show that adolescents who perceive their parents as more nurturing are less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors (Arım, Dahinten, Marshall, & Shapka, 2011). Nurturance has also been shown to increase compliance in children (Pfiffner & O'Leary, 1989).

Moreover, the strategies parents implement when interacting with their children have been linked to the behavioral and emotional development of children (Stormshak et al., 2000). Parent-child interactions affect children throughout stages of development. During toddlerhood, parents play a role in how their children learn to self-regulate. Studies show that whether parents use harsh discipline strategies or encourage autonomy and independence will affect a child's ability to self-manage and control his or her behavior (Calkins, Smith, Gill, & Johnson, 1998). Parents' harsh discipline strategies (i.e. high levels of scolding, anger, losing temper and yelling, etc.) have consistently been shown to negatively affect the parent-child relationship and child outcomes. Because parents use combinations of strategies, it can be a challenge to disentangle the impact of specific parenting behavior. However, studies show that parents' use of corporal punishment has been linked to the development of aggressive behavior in children (Gershoff, 2002). A recent longitudinal study demonstrated that maternal and paternal harsh verbal discipline predicted child's problem behaviors and depressive symptoms approximately a year later (Wang & Kenny, 2014). Parents using harsh discipline strategies tend to have noncompliant children (Calkins et al., 1998), who are also likely to have school and social difficulties (Fagan, 1998).

Parents' lack of consistency and permissiveness is another important factor influencing child aggression and problem behaviors development (Acker & O'Leary, 1996). Inconsistency can be reflected in low parent monitoring of the child behavior. This makes it less likely that the parent will observe and address problem behaviors. This can also mean a parent is inconsistent in how she responds to misbehavior, addressing it at times and ignoring, or perhaps even reinforcing it at others. These inconsistencies create

confusion, cause frustration to the child, and decrease the quality of parent-child interaction (Acker et al., 1996).

Parenting Stress

In their day-to-day lives, parents experience stress in response to their relationship with their child and the demands of their parenting role. Parenting stress has been conceptualized as the psychological distress a parent experiences when feeling he/she lacks resources (i.e. financial resources, parenting knowledge) needed to meet the demands of his/her parenting role (Abidin, 1995). Although stressful life events, economic hardships, or employment instability are likely sources of stress for a parent, stress that is specific to the parenting role has been shown to uniquely predict both parent and child characteristics (Deater-Deckard & Scarr, 1996). Research indicates that there may be some overlap between sources of stress; however, stress due to the parenting role has unique implications for both parent and child beyond those resulting from other sources of stress (Creasey & Reese, 1996;).

It is important to note that in most cases when examining the associations between child and parent constructs a bidirectional link exists (Belsky, 1984). As it relates to parenting stress, bidirectionality indicates that parents' psychological distress within their parenting role is both affected by, and affects other parent and child behaviors/outcomes. For example, research indicates that parents' self-efficacy is related to level of parenting stress reported (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012;). Theories of self-efficacy and parenting behavior argue that the parent's self-efficacy in her parenting role will affect her perception of stress in a given situation (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Belsky, 1984). Moreover, the amount of stress experienced by parents will in turn affect their

level of efficacy they feel. Similar associations exist between parenting stress and child problem behaviors (Brestan, Jacobs, Rayfield, & Eyberg, 1999; Johnston & Mash & Johnston, 1989).

One approach to understanding parenting stress is the *Parent-Child-Relationship* (P-C-R) model (Deater-Deckard, 2008). The P-C-R model explains parenting stress in terms of three factors: parent characteristics (i.e. psychological well-being), child characteristics (i.e. temperament), and the level of stress in the parent-child relationship. According to this model, parenting stress is the result of stress in all three dimensions, and is related to psychopathology in the parent and child as well as child behavior problems (Abidin, 1990).

For years research examining stress within the family structure focused primarily on major life stressors, such as financial hardships and work-related stress. These studies found that stressful life events, economic hardship, and work related stress were associated with psychological distress in parents and increased problem behaviors in children. They also found that a parent's disciplining strategies are affected by his/her psychological well-being. More recently, the research focus has shifted to emphasize stress more directly tied to the parenting demands.

Researchers have assessed parenting stress in two primary ways. One approach is to examine the effects of the mundane day-to-day hassles that the parent perceives (Crnic et al., 1990; Crnic et al., 2002). Researchers have found that the daily hassles in the parenting role are a valid predictor of family functioning (Crnic et al., 2002). Abidin (1983) argued that elevated levels of parenting stress are associated with negative parent and child outcomes, and aversive parent-child interactions. Both models of stress

emphasize the negative effect of increased parenting stress (Williford, Calkins, & Keane, 2007).

One frequently used measure of parenting stress is the *Parenting Stress Index* (PSI; Abidin, 1990). Research has supported this model finding parenting stress to be a predictor of maternal depression (Nam, Wikoff, & Sherraden, 2013) and child problem behaviors (Brestan et al., 1999). One study found that parents with elevated parenting stress reported higher levels of separation anxiety (Deater-Deckard, Scarr, McCartney, Eisenberg, 1994). This is important because a parent's separation anxiety or distress about being separated from her child has been linked to maternal depression, which puts the family at an increased risk for maladaptive parenting strategies (Hock & Schirtzinger, 1992). Parents who experience high parenting stress are also likely to feel less satisfied and effective in their parenting role (Crnic et al., 1990;).

Stressed parents are likely to be inconsistent, become quickly frustrated, and experience negative emotions when interacting with their children. This is reflected in the maladaptive parenting strategies they utilize with their children (Deater-Deckard, 2008). Parenting stress is also associated with a more authoritarian parenting style (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996), meaning that parents are highly demanding of the child and are not adequately responsive to his/her needs. Parents overwhelmed by the demands of the parenting role may become angry and use power assertive discipline strategies when interacting with their children (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996). These strategies include spanking, making threats of physical punishment, or grounding the child and taking away privileges. Because parenting strategies affect child behavior, this link is theorized to be

the connection between stressful events and child problem behaviors (Deater-Deckard et al., 1994).

Support and Parent Stress

Research examining the link between general social support and parenting domains typically ties support to the amount of stress a parent experiences. Many studies (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996) have found that parents who report a higher level of general social support are less stressed in their parenting role. Östberg & Hagekull (2000) assessed the direct and indirect effects of social support on parenting stress and found direct and indirect effects through mothers' household workload and their perception of their children's behaviors.

An important factor to consider is the specificity of support parents receive and whether it is general social support or parenting support. Looking back at the previously mentioned definition of parenting stress, which described the discrepancy between demand and resources, one can think of support as a resource to parents thereby alleviating stress in the parenting role. Taking this definition a step further allows us to see that it is not only the quantity, but rather the quality of support that makes a difference. Because stress is related to one's own perception and interpretation of the parenting demands, social support will only be beneficial if it is perceived by the parent as a resource to meet such demands. Unfortunately, the extant literature examining the influence of social support on the parenting dimensions, has focused on general social support. Many studies include a question about supporters' willingness to help with childcare, however, parenting support covers a wider array of factors.

Jay Belsky's (1984) Process Model identified social and parenting support as important factors in the parenting arena. Social support has typically been linked to favorable parent and child outcomes (Crnic et al., 2002). Higher levels of social support have been found to positively impact parents' psychological and physical health (Crnic, Greenberg, Robinson, Ragozin, 1984), as well as children's social and cognitive development (Melson, Ladd, & Hsu, 1993). Parents reporting higher levels of social support tend to be more emotionally and verbally responsive, and rank higher on warmth and monitoring than their counterparts (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch, & Ungar, 2005; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1998; Weinraub & Wolf, 1983).

Belsky (1984) and Cochran & Brassard (1979) theorized that social support may have direct and indirect effects on parenting and child outcomes. Parents who have a better social support system may be better equipped with parenting knowledge in interacting with their children. Indirectly, social support has also been linked to higher positive parental warmth and responsiveness, as well as sense of competence in the parenting role (Powell, 1980; Voydanoff et al., 1998; Weinraub et al., 1983). These characteristics tend to correlate with better parenting practices (Bonds, Gondoli, Sturge-Apple, & Salem, 2002). Such parenting behaviors have consistently been associated with child behavior and well-being.

Influencing parenting practices is one way social support affects child behavior and well-being. Cochran and colleague (1979) indicate that children can also be directly influenced by their parents' social network. Family members and family friends are often a significant part of a child's life and socialization process. In this way, the parent's support network directly affects the child. This influence will be especially strong if

parents utilize family and friends for childcare giving the child many opportunities to interact with members of the parent's social network. The child's social cognition and interpersonal skills are thus influenced in this way.

Social and parenting support to parents can come from a variety of different sources (i.e. spouse, extended family, friends, and community) and take different forms. Family and friends may act as sources of information regarding parenting practices and child development. They may also model specific parenting practices, and give parenting advice (MacPhee, Fritz, Miller-Heyl, 1996). Instrumental support is a tangible type of support offered to parents. This form of support can be seen in others' willingness to do specific things for the parent (i.e. babysit, lend money, or help with chores). Emotional support, on the other hand, can mean giving affection or listening to the parent vent. Emotional support is a less tangible form of support. Source, form, quantity, and quality are all important factors to consider when examining social support (Crnic et al., 2002). Research indicates that different forms of support may be more valuable to parents at different stages of the child's development and with different contextual factors (i.e. acculturation and socioeconomic status; Crnic et al., 1990). For example, if a family experiences great financial need, instrumental support may be especially valuable. It may also be that great financial stressors stand in the way of the positive influence of social support (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002).

Bonds and colleagues (2002) examined the mediational effects of parenting stress on the link between general and parenting support and parenting behavior. They found that parenting support from family and friends was associated with optimal parenting behavior reflected in warmth and monitoring levels of the parents. Results also showed

that this link was mediated by parenting stress. This indicates that parents receiving higher levels of parenting support report lower levels of stress in their parenting role, which in turn is associated with better parenting behavior. This study also found that parenting stress did not mediate the link between general support and parenting behavior. This indicates that parenting support will have more of an effect on reducing parenting stress than will general support. This in turn indicates that parenting support is a better predictor of parenting strategies than general support.

Negative implications of Support

Research has identified situations where social support may in fact be harmful, however. Whaler & Afton (1980) speak of the "insular mother" who has aversive social interactions with her social network. This mother may report a high quantity of social support, but such social exchanges are a source of distress. One example of this type of aversive interaction is found when family members or friends are intrusive with their support. For example, in-laws may offer parenting advice to a mother who feels coerced into following such advice (Crnic et al., 2002).

Additionally, Crnic and colleague (2002) explain that a parent's social network members may also model and convey maladaptive parenting practices. In this case, while the parent may not be distressed as a direct result of family or friends' involvement, they will eventually reap the consequences of their misinformation. Extended family and friends may hinder the parent from seeking helpful professional or community support services. This can happen directly by members discouraging the parent from seeking outside parenting resources. A parent may also be unaware of different resources because he/she is content with the support system he/she already has.

Parent Efficacy and Strategies

In addition to parenting stress, parenting-efficacy may be another mediator in the association between parenting support and parenting behavior. Albert Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy suggests that one's belief in one's ability to perform a task influences how well he/she actually carries out that task. Applying this theory to parenting suggests that a parent's parenting self-efficacy, or beliefs about his/her parenting abilities, will directly influence his/her parenting behavior (Coleman et al., , 1998). Thus, parents with higher levels of parental self-efficacy are more likely to engage in optimal parenting practices.

Numerous studies have linked parental self-efficacy to positive discipline strategies and child outcomes (see Jones & Prinz, 2005 for a review; Sanders & Woolley, 2005). Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay (1997) found parental self-efficacy correlated with monitoring and responsiveness levels of mothers and fathers. Another study found parents who were high on parental self-efficacy were more consistent in interacting with their children and were less likely to use harsh discipline strategies and overreact (Gross, Sambrook, & Fogg, 1999).

Multiple studies have also linked parental efficacy and social support. This effect may occur in two ways (Teti & Gelfand, 1991). First, members of a support group may affirm a parent's behavior and strategies, and thereby instilling in them a sense of confidence in their parenting strategies. The other way support can enhance parenting efficacy is through modeling and observation. A parent who observes other parents effectively manage misbehavior may in turn feel more effective in their role when using

these modeled methods. In this way, a parent's social support system will influence his/her parental efficacy.

Merrifield and Gamble (2013) found that support from spouse or partner predicted higher parental efficacy. Haslam, Pakenham, & Smith (2006) examined how social support works to alleviate depressive symptoms. Results indicated that parental efficacy mediated this link, indicating that social support increased parental efficacy, which in turn reduced depressive symptoms. Teti et al. (1991) found parental efficacy to predict maternal competence, maternal perception of child's difficulty, depressive symptoms, and social support. Importantly, they also found efficacy to fully mediate the effect of social support on parenting behavior. Other studies have also found support for the mediational role of parental efficacy.

MacPhee and colleagues (1996) examined parental efficacy in a clinically referred sample of 500 parents and guardians of children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old. The sample consisted of American Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo participants. Caregivers provided information regarding the level of emotional and instrumental support they perceived receiving, and their level of satisfaction with their support system. Although, not inclusive of all aspects of parenting support, instrumental support was measured using three questions about supporters helping with childcare and lending money. Parents were also asked to provide information about their parenting and disciplining behavior, and parental efficacy. Results indicated that instrumental, rather than emotional, support was a better predictor of parental efficacy. Parents' level of satisfaction with support was closely related to parenting behavior and satisfaction with the parenting role. Moreover, parental efficacy mediated the effect of support on parenting behavior for all three

groups. These mediating effects were also observed in first-generation Mexican immigrant mothers where those with higher levels of social support had higher levels of warmth and control (Izzo, Weiss, Shanahan, & Rodrigues-Brown, 2000). Thus, research indicates that parental efficacy plays a crucial role in family functioning and parent-child interactions. Increasing parental efficacy may prove an important potential target for interventions that aim to better the quality of parent-child interactions and optimize the effects of social support to parents.

American Indians in Extant Literature

MacPhee et al.'s (1996) is one of few studies that systematically examined parenting characteristics within American Indian (AI) families. Results of the study also found that when compared to Anglo and Mexican American samples, AI parents feel closer to their support system (MacPhee et al., 1996). In addition, AI parents relied more on extended kin members for support, and had more frequent contact with members of their support system. Unfortunately, empirical literature examining parenting and family functioning in AI populations is scarce. The majority of extant literature on AI families has come from anecdotal and qualitative data. These studies pointed to unique child-rearing techniques and challenges found within AI families and communities. It is important to note that within AI populations there exist many cultural variations. However, there are shared themes and values, as well as risk factors within Native cultures (Red Horse, 1997).

Within the 566 federally recognized AI tribes, the U.S. Census (2013) reports that in the year 2013 5.2 individuals who identified themselves as AI. Despite overcoming various historical trauma (e.g. forced removal, boarding schools), there continue to be

many challenges that face this population today. These challenges include high rates of suicide, poverty, substance use, teen pregnancies, high school dropout, and psychopathology (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; CDC, 2013; Glover, 2001; LaFromboise, et al., 2006). Parents in adversity homes are more likely to utilize maladaptive parenting behaviors and their children are at a higher risk for developing behavior problems.

Native families may also have the added struggle of living within mainstream culture. Parents may find themselves in a conflict between Native values and mainstream values. Yates (1987) outlines several traditional values typically found in AI families. He explains that Native children are taught the importance of sharing from a young age. Competition is not encouraged in order to avoid shaming the person who loses. Native children are also taught to value family and the community. While Native parents encourage autonomy, the welfare of one's family and the community take priority. As children grow older, they assume tribal responsibilities rather than growing independent of the family and community (Red Horse, 1997).

Native parents may also take a non-interference approach when disciplining their children (Glover, 2001). While this is often confused with a permissive parenting style, non-interference values the autonomy of the child and contends that a child will best learn from the natural consequences of her decisions. Further, Native families are likely to utilize inductive discipline when dealing their child's misbehavior (LaFromboise et al., 1998). Disciplining in this form may involve making the child aware of how her actions have affected others. Extended family members may be informed of the misbehavior and address it in an effort to maintain positive parent-child interactions. Children may also be

instructed to reflect on their actions and find ways to correct their wrongful actions (Campbell & Evans-Campbell, 2011). Discipline may also involve ignoring or shaming the child following her misbehavior (LaFromboise & Dizon, 2003).

Another important theme found in Native communities is the involvement of extended family members in the rearing of children. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and community and tribe leaders are involved in socializing and raising children (Boggs, 1958, Lewis, 1970). In Native families, an aunt or an uncle may hold the responsibility of building the child's character. In doing so aunts and uncles become "important teachers and mentors who share values, impart wisdom, serve as role models, and reinforce tribal teaching" (Glover, 2001). Parents may also rely on grandparents for childcare. Grandparents and tribal leaders teach and maintain tribal values through storytelling and tribal songs.

Extended family involvement can act as a protective factor in the face of the adversities and challenges facing AI families today. LaFromboise and colleagues (2006) examined factors contributing to resilience among a sample of American Indian adolescents living on a tribal reservations in the upper Midwestern region of the United States. Adolescents ranged in age from 10 to 15 years old and enrolled in fifth through eighth grades participated in the study. Eighty-four percent of the participants lived in homes with a household income below $35,000 per year while thirty-eight percent lived in single-parent households. Resilience was based on pro-social behaviors as defined by six categories in the midst of adversity: attitude towards school, future academic goals, school grades, alcohol use, substance use, and externalizing behaviors. Adversity was based on dimensions of high-risk parental behaviors and poverty (food stamps, family

assistance, an income below poverty rate, and financial strain as reported by parent or guardian). High-risk, parental behaviors included drug use, adult arrest, a history of alcohol treatment, and current binge drinking. The authors measured community support by the youths' perception of community members' concern and level of care about the youth playing sports, learning their American Indian language and customs, and their school grades. The authors found that support that this form of community support was associated with resilience in the current sample. Results also showed that those who participated in traditional activities, identified with American Indian culture, and had traditional spiritual involvement were also more resilient that their counterparts.

While LaFromboise and colleagues' (2006) study did not examine the effects of social support on parents, it does offer some support of the benefits of the kinship system found in Native communities. Scholars in the field (Campbell et al., 2011) have pointed to the essential role extended family members play in child rearing and socialization. In many cases extended family members assume many of the childcare and discipline responsibilities. They are a source of parenting knowledge for parents as well (Coleman et al., 1998). To our knowledge, the benefits of extended family parenting support within AI families have not been systematically studied.

Summary

The scarcity of research empirically examining American Indian parenting constructs limits our understanding of the unique parameters and needs of this population, and may hinder the efficacy of clinical interventions. AI families are at an increased risk for mental health problems and have a critical need for quality mental health care (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; CDC, 2013; Glover, 2001;

LaFromboise, et al., 2006). In order to provide optimal services, there is a need to understand family dynamics within and specific to Native communities. Because of the lack of empirical literature on this population, researchers and clinicians may not have established norms to inform their clinical practice and research. Empirically examining parenting dimensions within AI families will also help to establish psychometric properties and valid measures within that population.

Kinship ties are a prominent theme in AI communities (Glover, 2001). Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and tribal elders may all play a role in raising a child. Within the majority culture general social support and parenting support have typically been linked to lower levels parenting stress (Bonds et al., 2002; Deater-Deckard et al., 1996). It is likely that Native parents reap similar benefits. Extended family members may help alleviate the burdens parents perceive related to their parenting role. In addition, similar to parents in the majority culture, AI parents may have more positive views of their child and her misbehavior as a result of perceived support, which in turn would lower their level of parenting stress (Östberg et al., 2000).

Research also links parenting support and general social support to effective discipline strategies in majority culture (Belsky, 1984; Cochran et al., 1979; Bonds et al., 2002). One way that parenting and social support may have this effect is through directly alleviating parenting stress. Parents who perceive a strong support system may be less stressed in their parenting role, which in turn allows them to make more appropriate decisions when dealing with their children's misbehavior (Bonds et al., 2002). To our understanding MacPhee et al.'s (1996) is the only study empirically examining the effect of parenting support on discipline strategies in AI families. Understanding the role of

parenting support in this fashion will allow us to better understand possible protective factors found in AI families. As mentioned above, this understanding is critical to informed clinical practice and interventions.

Although MacPhee et al.'s (1996) study made significant contributions to the extant literature, there remains questions about parenting support in AI families and its effect on discipline strategies. MacPhee et al.'s (1996) study examined emotional and instrumental support to parents, and concluded that social support affects discipline strategies, and that this link is mediated by parental competence. However, the support questionnaire used, *Social Network Questionnaire (SNQ)*, minimally captured the parenting support and targeted broad social support. In addition, the sample was drawn from a clinical population, which may limit the generalizability of the results to non-clinic families. Further studies need to examine these constructs in non-clinical populations and in a way that captures support to parents directly related to their parenting role.

VITA

Mira Armans

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Master of Science/Arts

Thesis: EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF PARENTING SUPPORT ON DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES AND THE MEDIATING ROLES OF PARENTING STRESS AND PARENTAL EFFICACY IN AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES

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